Published by the City of Lafayette
Summer 2002
Vol. 12, No. 3

LAFAYETTE VISTAS

LAFAYETTE'S EXCELLENT SCHOOLS

"Great Schools" and "Semi-Rural Character" are the two most common reasons people choose to live in Lafayette. Indeed, the City's mission statement begins with the phrase "Lafayette was incorporated for the preservation and enhancement of the semi-rural character of the community" and many articles in Vistas have focused on the City's efforts to maintain the semi-rural environment. But what about the other side of Lafayette's equation — the schools? Because the schools are separate governmental entities, not run by the City, we haven't talked about them much, however, since schools and education are such an important part of our community, we decided to devote this entire issue to the "Excellent Schools of Lafayette."

Student Art by Jared Roses

Overview of the School System

Lafayette has two school districts. The Lafayette School District includes four elementary schools: Burton Valley, Happy Valley, Lafayette and Springhill; and one middle school: M.H. Stanley. Total enrollment in the District is about 3500. The majority of Lafayette's high school students attend Acalanes (approx. 1,300 students) while a few go to Campolindo and Del Oro. All of these schools, plus Las Lomas and Miramonte, are part of the Acalanes Union High School District, which serves Lafayette, Canyon, Moraga, Orinda and parts of Walnut Creek.

Each of the two school districts has a Governing Board made up of five residents elected at-large to four-year terms. Because these are staggered terms and because there are two districts, voters in the city have frequent opportunities to guide the direction of our schools.

A Little Bragging

In almost any way you judge them, our schools come out winners. Lafayette's students consistently receive high scores statewide (see chart). Stanley, Acalanes and Happy Valley have all been recognized as California Distinguished Schools and last year Acalanes was awarded an Academic Performance Index of 832, placing it among the top 10% of public schools in the state. An astonishing 95% of Acalanes high school graduates pursue higher education after graduation. In 2000-01 the average SAT scores for Acalanes students were 575 for Verbal and 604 for Math, significantly above state averages of 498 for Verbal and 538 for Math.

Lafayette School District's academic program is enriched through the use of Differentiated Instruction, which addresses every student's need at their individual learning level — from remediation and modification, to acceleration and enrichment. In almost every subject, at every grade level, at every school, Lafayette School District's students place within the top 20th percentile nationally according to Student Achievement tests in 2000-2001.

In addition to the core curriculum, all Lafayette schools offer a wide range of enrichment and specialized courses as well as numerous extra curricular activities. Students participate in computer labs, sports, music, art, technical education, and student government. Many of these programs have received awards — far too many for us to list here.

Community Support

Lafayette residents are committed to their schools both financially and personally. In an unsurpassed record, voters in the AUHS District have passed every bond issue or tax increase ever put before them. In the 1970s when funds were short, residents organized crews to paint and repair the schools. In the wake of Proposition 13, concerned citizens organized the Acalanes District Education Foundation to enhance the quality of education through donations from individuals. The Lafayette Arts and Science Foundation, started in 1980, raises about $500,000 a year "to support and enrich the education of every child in the Lafayette public schools through a broad community-based effort." Parents play an integral role in all aspects of the schools and devote countless hours of time through parent's groups and booster clubs. At Stanley Middle School parents volunteer more than 15,000 hours of time a year. Thanks to citizen approved bond measures, schools in both of our districts are in the final stages of renovations.

The high achievements of Lafayette's students reflect many factors including involved parents, a supportive community, dedicated teachers and a rigorous curriculum. Every resident of Lafayette should be proud of our public schools.

For more information about our excellent schools see their web-sites: **acalanes.k12.ca.us** and **lafsd.k12.ca.us**

Contact Information

Lafayette School District:
Superintendent: Jon Frank, 299-3501

Acalanes Union High School District:
Superintendent: Randy Olson, 942-9601

California 2001 Standardized Testing & Reporting (STAR) Scores*

	READING	MATH
State Average	42.9	52.7
Countra Costa County Avg	53.6	60.8
Lafayette Elementary	83.4	86.4
Acalanes Union High	68.1	79.4

**Scores represent percentile rank and were calculated using weighted averages from each grade.*

More information about test and scores can be found at www.star.cde.ca.gov

Above and Beyond at Acalanes

In addition to offering standard academic subjects, a rich high school environment should include opportunities for students to pursue special interests and discover hidden talents. While sports, clubs and extra-curricular activities have always been part of the Acalanes High experience, the school also offers classes that go way beyond these conventional subjects. Three programs that have received special recognition at Acalanes — Art, Journalism, and Auto Technology — are popular not only for their subject matter but because each reflects the personal commitment of individual teachers.

Art Enriches Life

Decorating the walls of the high school's administrative office are sensitive, lively paintings done by Acalanes art students. About 140 students enroll every year in the 5 art classes taught by Karen Carbone, who focuses on giving her students a new way of seeing and experiencing life through art. "Art makes students more sensitive to the world around them. They develop a creative approach to problem solving, an approach they then use in other areas of their lives."

Under Carbone's guidance, students learn drawing, painting, printmaking, and sculpture and find talents they had no idea they possessed. Every year many Acalanes students enter local and regional art contests and win awards. At the spring Art Show at Sun Valley Mall, out of 540 entries from all of Contra Costa County, five Acalanes students won awards. In the Peace into Art competition sponsored by the Mount Diablo Peace Center in Walnut Creek, every Acalanes student that entered won an award. True to her philosophy of the value of art for its own sake, however, Karen Carbone is reluctant to emphasize awards. She feels that more important than recognition from judges, is the satisfaction students get through their own creative exploration. "Although everyone in class may be working on a painting of the same still life arrangement, each person's solution is so different. Seeing the wide range of individual responses is a wonderful experience."

Photography by Acalanes High Students

Journalism Foster Excellence

Every three weeks, 38 students in Larry Freeman's Journalism class produce the *"Blueprint"*, a 24-page newspaper. They do it all — reporting, writing, photography, even cartoons and layout. Filled with reports on school events, sports, feature articles, student editorials, cartoons, photos and ads, just producing a paper every 3 weeks is a tremendous effort, but producing a paper of the quality of the *"Blueprint"* is incredible. The American Scholastic Press Association recently awarded *"Blueprint"* First Place with Special Merit, their highest award. Larry Freeman explained, "We got 955 points out of a possible 1000 points — covering all aspects of the paper." The paper, along with individual student contributors, won 27 awards in the Northern California Press Women's contest this spring.

When asked why he thought his program was so successful, Freeman said, "A lot of it is because I get the cream of the student crop, and then I get to work with them for three years, developing their talents." Working on the *"Blueprint"* has become very popular and there are always more students interested than the program can accommodate. Consequently, students have to apply for the positions, including interviews and writing samples. This year, out of 26 applications, only 14 were selected."

In addition to teaching students obvious skills such as reporting, news, sports and editorial writing, the class also includes lessons on legal and ethical aspects of the press. Freeman emphasizes that the process of producing the paper offers students other benefits as well, "They learn a lot about organization, time management and general working skills."

Photography by Acalanes High Students

Auto Tech Goes the Extra Mile

Perhaps a surprise, given the school's college prep and pre-professional orientation, Auto Technology is another favorite at Acalanes — and not just among the guys. Plenty of girls are signing up too. Auto Tech teacher Grant Cusick says there are a variety of reasons students take the class: some are interested in mechanical engineering or an automotive career, but others just want to be able to fix their own cars, be educated consumers, or take a class where they don't have to just sit in a chair.

Most of the class is hands-on — kids actually get to work on cars — both fixing them and tearing them apart. Students can bring in their own cars or work on vehicles provided for the class.

Grant Cusick gets to campus every morning about 5:30 and students start arriving at the shop most mornings by 6:00 or 6:30. After school, you'll find the same thing, kids working on cars, individually or in groups. Cusick has created a casual atmosphere for the kids — they feel comfortable there and Cusick is always on hand when they need help or advice. And the advice isn't always about cars. Lots of kids find the shop an easy place to talk and Cusick an easy person to confide in, which is probably one of the reasons Cusick has been named "Outstanding Teacher" by Acalanes students more than once.

ABC's in the Information Age at Lafayette School District

Lafayette's schools just aren't what they use to be — they're better! There are more challenges, more opportunities, more individualized learning paths, and many of these benefits are the result of introducing computers into the classroom. Just as computers have become a part of everyday life in our homes and our businesses, they have become an integral part of the learning environment, particularly in the Lafayette School District.

Getting classrooms equipped for technology and helping teachers use it effectively is the two-pronged focus of the Tech Plan at Lafayette School District. Angie Corritone, Instructional Technology Specialist for the District emphasized, "It is our philosophy that technology is just a tool, a part of the learning environment. We look for ways to integrate technology into everyday curriculums to enhance the learning process."

While the 3R's are still important subjects for elementary students, Information Age students also need to learn skills that didn't even exist 40 years ago. Simply memorizing a bunch of dry facts will not prepare students for a world where the total volume of information doubles every 7 years. The ability to locate, understand and analyze new information are critical skills for our students. The LSD Tech Plan was developed with this goal in mind.

Lafayette School District was an early adopter of technology and the entire district was networked seven years ago. Lafayette School District is now recognized as a leader in the field of Educational Technology, and many other districts look to it as a model for their own programs. Corritone says one reason LSD got a head start on developing Educational Technology was the tremendous support of parents and community members who recognized its importance.

Photography by Acalanes High Students

Integrating technology into the learning environment involves more than installing equipment and purchasing software. Just as important is staff development and training; teachers need to be comfortable using technology and have the resources necessary to apply it to their curriculum. To accomplish this, LSD has a broad range support staff available: Computer Specialists and Technicians who manage, install, and troubleshoot equipment, Technology Teachers and Tech Mentors who help teachers individually design lessons using technology, Librarians to gather internet resources and other media, and an administration incredibly committed to the program.

Of course, implementing Educational Technology costs money. The total estimated annual cost of the LSD Tech program is about $800,000, which includes personnel, hardware, software, and training. The District funds about 75% of the costs, with the other 25% coming from parent's groups, donations and the Lafayette Arts and Science Foundation. LASF has been a major force in developing Educational Technology in Lafayette. For instance, the Tech Mentor Program started as a pilot program of LASF and is now the biggest program in LSD's Tech Plan.

As far as they have come, this is really just the beginning. Every year the technology program expands...the equipment improves...the teachers become more sophisticated in their use of technology...and it all translates into students who are well prepared to assume their role in a fast changing, highly technical world.

Around Town

Town Hall Theatre — **Box Office: 283-1557 or www.thtc.org** Tickets available at The Lafayette Bookstore.

8/16 – 8/30: A Midsummer Night's Dream Presented by Butterfield 8/New Urban Dance Company. A stunning combination of traditional theater with experimental verve, blending modern dance, spoken word and music.

9/12 – 10/6: Little Shop of Horrors – One of the longest-running Off-Broadway shows of all time, this affectionate spoof of 1950s sci-fi movies is charming, tuneful and hilarious, with tongue firmly planted in cheek.

Sept 14-15 — **7TH ANNUAL ART & WINE FESTIVAL** Arts and crafts booths, food, wine, micro-brewed beer and live music. Downtown Lafayette. For more information call: Chamber of Commerce, 284-7404.

Oct 27 — **LAFAYETTE RESERVOIR RUN** – Mark your calendars so you don't miss out on Northern California's most scenic fun run! There is a 10K course, as well as shorter, flat 3-5K courses for walkers and the "stroller bridage." For more information call: Chamber of Commerce, 284-7404.

September — **MUSIC IN THE PLAZA** – Join us for a series of musical evenings in Lafayette Plaza Park this fall. Dates and times to be determined.

Sept 21 & Oct 19 — **HOME COMPOSTING WORKSHOP** – Orchard Nursery: 1:00 – 3:00 pm. Discover how to home compost your yard trimmings and selected kitchen waste in three easy steps by attending many of the free workshops. For other dates and locations, visit **www.wastediversion.org** or call 906-1806.

Parks & Recreation — 500 St Mary's Road, Call 284-2232 for info & reservations.

8/9: ACE OF CLUBS CONCERT (High School Age only, ID required) 7 – 11 pm, $7, Lafayette Community Center.

Private Schools in Lafayette

In addition to our public schools, Lafayette has three excellent private schools: Bentley, Meher, and St. Perpetua, plus numerous pre-schools.

Bentley Upper School is a co-educational non-sectarian day school for grades 9-12. Students are attracted to the small class size (under 16) and the strong college prep curriculum. Although founded only 4 years ago, Bentley already has a waiting list for 9th grade admission. Enrollment is currently 165, but will grow to 240 when all the grades are full. Bill Heim, Headmaster. 925-283-2101.

The Meher Schools combine pre-school, elementary school, and full day care in one facility. Their focus is on enhancing academic programs through exposure to the arts, including drama, fine art and music. They have 385 students in pre-school through 5th grade. Ellen Evans, Principal. 800-500-7797.

St. Perpetua is a co-educational Catholic school for grades K-8. Founded in 1963 this is the oldest private school in Lafayette, and currently has 256 students. As part of the Oakland Diocese, St. Perpetua offers religious education in addition to standard curriculum in a caring, Catholic environment. Mrs. Burman, Principal. 925-284-1640.

Historic Snapshots

Part 9:
Lafayette's Schools

After failing to make his fortune in the Gold Rush, Benjamin Shreve built Lafayette's first grammar school in the 1850's. And, in the grand spirit of entrepreneurship common among the area settlers, Benjamin Shreve also became the first teacher at this white schoolhouse on Golden Gate Way between First and Second Streets.

In the late 1860s local citizens started a tradition that continues today — they made education a top priority when they agreed to tax themselves in order to provide better schools. On November 14, 1868, the citizens overwhelmingly (16-3) approved an extra tax to raise $1000 for a second new schoolhouse. Completed in 1871, the school was located at what is now the Cotton & Company store. Also demonstrating the tradition of fiscal responsibility that citizens continue to demand today, the project came in under budget with building costs of $825 and a land cost of $41.

The third schoolhouse was built in 1893 and today that building is the Lafayette Methodist Church on Moraga Road. It was at this school that Margaret Jane "Jenny" Bickerstaff taught from 1899 to 1902, as part of her 17 years as a teacher in western Contra Costa County. She was paid $60 a month and taught 1st through 5th grade plus one year of high school. Jenny started another tradition that continues today: she was the first of many Lafayette teachers who return to teach here after formerly being a student in our schools.

The third oldest Lafayette school, built in 1893, is now the Lafayette Methodist Church.

Jump forward to the mid 1930s: Lafayette was now a town of about 1500 people. In addition to the local residents there were many people who had summer homes here. These people worked in the cities on the other side of the hills, but most would not even consider commuting from Lafayette because the trip across the hill was too time consuming. Colonel H. M. Garrett, a resident of Lafayette's Happy Valley, saw the potential for growth if the roads could be made better and he was instrumental in starting the movement to build the Caldecott Tunnel, which opened in 1937. As more people began to move to the area, new schools were needed, and in 1939 Lafayette Elementary was the first of our current schools to be built.

Meanwhile, a local high school was sorely needed since Lafayette high school students were traveling to either Concord via the "Toonerville Trolley," or to Richmond by bus. In February 1939, voters of five elementary school districts overwhelmingly approved a proposal to establish a high school district. Acalanes became the first school in the district, built for a cost of $330,000 and opened to students on September 10, 1940. The school, which was designed to serve 500 students, consisted of 3 classroom units in separate buildings connected by a covered corridor. The school's low-slung open architecture, now so prevalent in schools, was totally new and Acalanes was the first school to be built this way. It brought world attention to Lafayette, including a feature in Life magazine.

More people came, more schools were built: Stanley in 1953, Springhill in 1955, Happy Valley in 1956, Campolindo in 1962. In the 1970s, the number of students in Lafayette started declining and the last of our current schools, Burton Valley, was established in 1979 as a consolidation of two other schools.

Although Lafayette hasn't built any new schools in over 2 decades, construction hasn't stopped. In the last ten years, through the passage of two bond measures, every Lafayette school has had a renovation project…an indication of the commitment and tradition of providing Lafayette students with excellent schools.

City Directory

For Council Members call: **284-1968**

Council Members

Don Tatzin	**Mayor**
Carol Federighi	**Vice Mayor**
Erling Horn	**Council Member**
Ivor Samson	**Council Member**
Jay Strauss	**Council Member**

Messages to **all** Council Members: **Ext. 907**

Administration

General Reception and	**284-1968**
Steven Falk, City Manager	**Fax: 284-3169**
Tracy Robinson, Admin. Srv. Dir.	**299-3227**
Gonzalo Silva, Financial Srv. Mgr.	**299-3213**
Joanne Robbins, City Clerk	**299-3210**

Community Development

Ann Merideth, Director	**299-3218**
Tony Coe, Engineering Srv. Mgr.	**284-1951**
Niroop Srivatsa, Planning Srv. Mgr.	**284-1976**
Ron Lefler, Public Works Srv. Mgr.	**299-3214**
P.W. Hotline (to report problems)	**299-3259**

If you observe illegal dumping in creeks & storm drains or accidental spills on roads, call Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Division 646-2286.

Lamorinda School Bus Program

Juliet Shanks, Analyst	**299-3216**
	Or 299-3215

Parks and Recreation — 284-2232

Jennifer Russell, Director	
Yvonne Ozorio, Senior Services	**284-5050**
Teen Programs	**284-5815**

Police Services

Emergency: 24 Hours	**911**
Police Dispatch: 24 Hours	**284-5010**
Police Business Office:	**283-3680**

Anonymous Tipline, Traffic Enforcement, Suggestions & LEARN (Laf. Emergency Action Response Network), 299-3232 X 2205

Addresses — Fax: 284-3169

Street Address:	**3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. #210**
Mailing Address:	**P.O. Box 1968**
	Lafayette, CA 94549-1968
Website:	**www.ci.lafayette.ca.us**

E-MAIL: Council/staff members can be reached via e-mail using the following address format:

First Initial + Last Name @lovelafayette.org
Example: SFalk@lovelafayette.org

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